

# Key Elements of an Academic Standards Revision Process

Based on a scan of publicly available state information and existing research, states should consider the following 10 key elements when seeking to improve their future academic standards revision process.



## 1. Determine the timing of the standards revision

- ⇒ **ASSESS THE FREQUENCY OF REVISIONS.** Many states revise their standards on a schedule set in law. Legislated timelines vary from every six years to every 10 years. Some standards revisions follow a needs-based timeline, specifically in content areas such as career and technical education.
- ⇒ **DEVELOP A SCHEDULE FOR REVISIONS.** Allowing time for implementation of the most recent revisions should be considered when scheduling the standards revision timeline. This will ensure that evidence and reliable data support decisions for revisions.



## 2. Identify the framework for the start of the revision process

- ⇒ **UTILIZE AN EXISTING FRAMEWORK.** It is important to decide at the start whether to revise existing state standards, revise other national or other state's standards, or create standards from scratch.
- ⇒ **EXAMINE IF THE CURRENT STANDARDS STRUCTURE BEST SERVES ALL STUDENTS.** Current standards should use up-to-date best practices, as well as research from pivotal reports published since the last revision cycle (e.g., *Framework for K-12 Science Education* and *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*). Teams can use disaggregated data to better understand the needs of specific groups of learners.



## 3. Organize resources and the scope of the revision process

- ⇒ **ESTABLISH A BUDGET FOR THE STANDARDS REVISION PROCESS.** Many states identify budget needs and draw from general education funds. Anticipated costs may include travel; substitute teachers; and hiring of consultants to facilitate the process, including communication strategies and feedback collection. Annual costs can range from \$50,000 to \$200,000.
- ⇒ **DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE REVISION.** Defining the scope allows for a clear understanding of the work and a focus on the needed revision. In determining the scope of work, consider the length of the process (creating a standard from scratch may take more time, use of data, and independent alignment studies), which may impact the budget.



## 4. Establish committee organization and expectations

- ⇒ **BUILD THE REVISION COMMITTEE.** Consider if state policies require the appointment or selection (by an application) of committee members. While not all states publish their selection process, those that do often utilize an application process for equitable selection and diverse inclusion. Each state has different requirements for skill sets, but in all cases, classroom teachers and higher education faculty with deep content understandings are key. Parents, business representatives, informal educators, administrators, and board members are also important.
- ⇒ **DEFINE THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE.** To balance inclusivity and expertise, states found different ways to structure the committees. Allow for committee members' available time, expertise, and skills to be utilized by organizing into teams. Some examples include a review team, an advisory team, a writing team, and a leadership team.
- ⇒ **IDENTIFY THE ROLE OF COMMITTEE, STATE, AND OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS.** Each of the reviewed states identified that the committee's voice leads the work to revise standards. State staff expertise is used to organize the tasks and support the committee. In some states, outside facilitators are utilized to hold everyone accountable for specific roles.



## 5. Create a communication plan

- ⇒ **COMMUNICATE INFORMATION ON THE CONTENT BACKGROUND AND PROCESS.** Communication is critical to engagement and eventual buy-in. Most of the reviewed states utilized their website and social media throughout the process.
- ⇒ **RECOGNIZE POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES.** Some information will need to be tailored to specific audiences—parents, educators, higher education, and administrators. Information should be shared using plain language.



## 6. Solicit feedback

- ⇒ **DESIGNATE MULTIPLE WAYS TO COLLECT FEEDBACK.** Examples include surveys; in-person meetings; town halls; open agendas on state board meetings; and ongoing communication through various electronic tools, such as social media.
- ⇒ **ESTABLISH KEY PARTNERS AT THE START.** Work to engage partners in the feedback and to draw in community members who may not often be involved in the process. This will support more inclusive and diverse voices.
- ⇒ **CREATE CLEAR TIMELINES TO GATHER BROAD FEEDBACK.** A lesson learned from other states when communicating with the public is to hold clear deadlines for drafts to collect feedback at appropriate times of the process.



## 7. Examine research and collect data pertinent to the revision

- ⇒ **ANALYZE CURRENT RESEARCH AND DATA OR CONDUCT YOUR OWN.** From the start of the planning to the final approval of the standards, research informs the revisions. Some states utilize Comprehensive Centers or other independent organizations to conduct research.
- ⇒ **USE DATA AND RESEARCH FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.** It is important to examine a variety of evidence and perspectives to keep bias from interrupting the process.



## 8. Synthesize information and write the standards

- ⇒ **ASK KEY QUESTIONS.** Questions philosophically inform the work and keep the standards from becoming too expansive. Example questions to consider include:
  - ⇒ What is essential for students to learn?
  - ⇒ How will standards be structured—grade by grade or grade-band clusters?
  - ⇒ What will be the content domains?
  - ⇒ How is feedback from both field and community members incorporated?
  - ⇒ Are the standards consistent in the grain size of learning?
  - ⇒ Do standards guide instruction without dictating how skills/ideas should be taught?
  - ⇒ Do standards provide coherent framing rather than a laundry list?
  - ⇒ Do standards require students to apply content knowledge and can it be applied in various contexts?
  - ⇒ Are changes justified based on trends in feedback data?



## 9. Finalize the process

- ⇒ **IDENTIFY THE PROCESS TO FINALIZE THE REVISED STANDARDS.** Determine what flexibility exists when publishing the standards. Some states work for consistency across all standards in all content areas, while other states allow for the uniqueness of a content area to drive the final publishing of standards.
- ⇒ **PRESENT REVISIONS TO DECISION MAKERS.** It is important to identify the decision makers and coordinate final presentation of the revisions. The committee should be the first to see the final draft to ensure that it represents the work; then, key partners; and finally, community members including parents, educators, and administrators.



## 10. Support implementation

- ⇒ **PROVIDE SOME SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION.** Recognize that implementation is a local responsibility, but the state has an opportunity to provide support. Many states have roles for local education agencies (LEAs), regional education agencies (REAs), and the state education agency (SEA).
- ⇒ **CONSIDER THE TIMING AND TIMELINE OF THE SUPPORTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.** Implementations vary across states/subjects from one to five years. Research identifies two to four years as the ideal time needed to ensure quality implementation.